



# Department Updates

May 2020

## County Clerk

DeeAnn Cook  
County Clerk

### UPCOMING ELECTION SCHEDULE FOR 2020:

Fall Partisan Primary – Tuesday, August 11

Fall General Election – Tuesday, November 3

With three of the five elections scheduled for 2020 now behind us, it would be an understatement to say that these have been highly unusual and challenging elections thus far. The COVID-19 situation has prompted many challenges including a high number of absentee requests and municipal clerks worked diligently to keep up with the demand. Municipal budgets have taken a hit with the additional expenses that go along with absentee voting. Under normal circumstances, our area experiences a fairly low number of absentee requests since most of our voters come in person on Election Day and cast their vote on our touch screen machines. That has changed. April was particularly challenging due to the twists and turns right up until the time of the election. Clerks were told to continue preparing for in person voting while the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled on whether the election would be held or not. Ultimately, the election did go forward and very successfully in our area. For the first time, National Guard members were called up at the last minute to assist with the election. We had several work at various polling places throughout Barron County and the clerks were highly satisfied with their assistance. They showed up on time, well trained and prepared and willing to do whatever they were asked to do. When asked by the media about our experience, my quote to them was “I’d never hesitate to call out the Guards!” For the first time, election results were not tallied or reported on Election Night. There was extra time allowed for absentees that were mailed on or before Election Day to be counted. An extraordinarily high number of hand count paper ballots had to be counted due to absentees. There were many innovative provisions made by municipal clerks and poll workers to make polling places safe and in person voting was much heavier than anticipated, given the circumstances at the time. 30% of all eligible and 44% of all registered voters cast ballots at the April Presidential Preference Election. At the county board level, two incumbents were challenged but defeated their challengers. Newly elected member Stacey Wenzel replaced Jess Miller who retired from the board and Tod Gerland replaced Andrew Mommsen who did not seek re-election. Special thanks to Vonnice Ritchie, Margo Katterhagen, Sharon Millermon and Ann Barnes who helped Jess and I take in election results.

The May Special Election for Congressional District #7 to fill the seat vacated by Sean Duffy also had a high number of absentee requests, but less than April. Ten National Guard members served as poll workers throughout the county, again very successfully. Total voter turnout was 31% of eligible and 45% of registered voters which was slightly higher than April. Tom Tiffany defeated Tricia Zunker but that office is up for election again this fall. All results were in and posted to our website by 9:15pm. Special thanks to Vonnice Ritchie, Jeff and Pam French and Sharon Millermon who volunteered to help Jess and I take in election results.

Even though the COVID-19 situation exists and our building is closed to the public, we have continued issuing marriage licenses by appointment. We expect a rush on licenses once people start to gather. We are very much looking forward to our building opening again soon!

Candidates for the Fall 2020 Elections have until June 1, 2020 to file their candidacy in order to get their name on the ballot. In addition to President/Vice President, Senate, Congress and Assembly the more local positions up for election include District Attorney, County Clerk, Treasurer and Register of Deeds. All current local incumbents have declared and filed their candidacy. No additional candidates have filed for any of the local positions at the time of this writing.

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## Treasurer

### Vonnie Ritchie Treasurer

The spreadsheet below shows a comparison of taxes for the past five years. The unpaid taxes as of February are collected by our office for all municipalities except for the City of Rice Lake. We have been collecting the 1<sup>st</sup> installment taxes for the Town of Almena for the past few years. You may have noticed on your tax bill that the State did not levy any taxes the past three years. The 2017 unpaid percentage (25.49%) in February was slightly lower which I believe was due to the income tax change for the 2018 tax year and more people paid the 2017 taxes in 2017 to take advantage of the credit. The Lottery and Gaming Credit was a bit higher for 2019 taxes. See comparison below:

<b>Tax Year/Year Due</b>	<b>2015/2016</b>	<b>2016/2017</b>	<b>2017/2018</b>	<b>2018/2019</b>	<b>2019/2020</b>
State Tax	653,570	673,355	0	0	0
County Tax	19,569,260	20,210,095	20,916,813	21,315,394	21,955,284
Muni Tax	19,177,352	19,354,677	19,950,896	20,980,904	21,022,651
Special Districts	372,523	376,312	371,818	478,297	444,177
Schools	39,673,624	40,570,908	42,771,907	44,540,218	45,349,264
WITC	1,411,339	1,473,720	1,530,050	1,601,112	1,663,511
Total Levied Taxes	80,857,669	82,659,067	85,541,484	88,915,926	90,434,886
Omitted/70.43 Corrections	-55,657	24,603	56,116	2,920	15,472
Special Assessments/Charges/DU	652,155	658,412	795,858	789,312	866,963
MFL	160,684	172,902	186,366	190,347	211,661
<b>Total Tax Roll</b>	<b>81,614,851</b>	<b>83,514,984</b>	<b>86,579,824</b>	<b>89,898,506</b>	<b>91,528,983</b>
Credits paid by State:					
Lottery Credits	1,496,068	1,777,606	1,726,576	2,469,995	2,819,270
First Dollar Credits	1,568,524	1,602,265	1,670,700	1,718,419	1,711,972
State Credits	6,735,286	6,887,837	7,782,872	7,872,704	8,110,179
Due After Credits	71,814,972	73,247,276	75,399,675	77,837,388	78,887,561
Taxes Paid to Muni's	49,257,290	52,689,846	56,178,498	55,508,672	55,297,601
% paid by January 31st	<b>68.59%</b>	<b>71.93%</b>	<b>74.51%</b>	<b>71.31%</b>	<b>70.10%</b>
Balance Due Feb	22,557,683	20,557,430	19,221,177	22,328,716	23,589,960
% unpaid February 1st	<b>31.41%</b>	<b>28.07%</b>	<b>25.49%</b>	<b>28.69%</b>	<b>29.90%</b>
Unpaid December 31 Year Due	812,382	582,283	538,374	584,169	
% unpaid 12/31 year due	<b>0.9954%</b>	<b>0.6972%</b>	<b>0.6218%</b>	<b>0.6498%</b>	
Unpaid 12/31/2019	1,031	84,249	271,469	584,169	
% unpaid 12/31/2019	<b>0.0013%</b>	<b>0.1009%</b>	<b>0.3135%</b>	<b>0.6498%</b>	
Unpaid Balance 5/1/2020	1,031	61,573	218,307	438,605	18,994,765
% unpaid 5/1/2020	0.0013%	0.0737%	0.2521%	0.4879%	20.7527%
Unpaid Balance 5/1/2019	50,451	235,706	416,208	18,930,292	
% unpaid 5/1/2019	0.0618%	0.2822%	0.4807%	21.0574%	

#### Tax Deed

The In-Rem tax foreclosure process has been delayed this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Governor's temporary ban on evictions and foreclosures pursuant to Emergency Order No. 15 issued on March 27, 2020. Our list of delinquent 2016 taxes is much smaller than past years as taxpayers have been making payment even though we have not filed the Notice of Commencement.

#### Staff Changes

Dianne Bowen retired after 24 years working in the Treasurer's Office. She was very hard working and dedicated to serving the taxpayers, citizens, and other county staff of Barron County. Her last day in the office was March 6, 2020 and we truly miss her.

We are happy to welcome Erica Sinclair to our office staff, she was hired on April 1, 2020, to fill the Financial Specialist position. She has been with us for a little over a month and is learning quickly all of the different job duties and responsibilities. She has been willing to jump in and help with anything in these different and challenging times.

## Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC)

**Jennifer Jako**  
Director

Just like all departments, the ADRC is experiencing unparalleled times as we continue to find ways to serve older adults and people with disabilities in the safest ways during this pandemic. Older adults and people with disabilities are at higher risk of having complications from COVID-19. The virus is challenging because it is easily transmitted, has a higher mortality rate in older adults, can have rapid outbreaks, and no one has immunity or pre-exposure to it. The strongest line of defense we have is to be cautious with older adults and implement safety precautions. Best practices recommended from State disease prevalence and infection control experts are that ADRCs do not open for face to face appointments or walk-ins. Staff and customers are also strongly encouraged to socially distance and wear face masks when social distancing is not possible. Safe travel habits and good handwashing are also best practices. Some staff continue to work remotely to minimize a large staff presence in the office. The State has informed our offices that they would prefer ADRCs do not open their doors or start group gatherings (senior dining, workshops, and adult day respite) until testing and tracing systems are stronger; estimated to be closer to fall. The ADRC is working very closely with Public Health as we evaluate our services.

We have been and remain open for business with the goal to maintain services in a safe, modified way. Our customers depend on our services and advocacy more than ever right now. Additionally, without having access to the critical services we provide, people would be at higher risk of poor outcomes. The ADRC is thankful to the support of Public Health, Administration, and the County Board to assure our services are considered essential and have continued in safe ways. The ADRC staff say thank you to Laura Sauve and all of the Public Health staff's hard work and dedication during these trying times.

With the ending of Governor Ever's Safer At Home order, the ADRC is following recommendations from local Public Health to determine the safest and most convenient ways to meet the needs of our community. Some services have remained the same for our customers with staff precautions, while some services have remained suspended. Here is a snapshot of our current services:

- **Professional appointments with Dementia Care Specialist, Elder Benefit Specialists, Disability Benefit Specialist, or I&A Specialists:** Face-to-face contact including appointments, home visits, and walk-ins to the ADRC remain suspended at this time. Assistance with resources or applying for benefits are provided over the phone or virtually over the computer.
- **Meals on Wheels:** Food security has been a top priority/top need in our community. Service continues as usual, with continued driver precautions including door drops and masks. We have condensed some routes to minimize the number of drivers out and about each day. Our Meals on Wheels service has been one of the biggest service requests during the pandemic. Participants and their caregivers have been grateful that the service has continued without interruption. We have received supplemental CARES Act funding to help assure this service continues.
- **Grab and Go Lunch:** Senior dining locations remain suspended to avoid gatherings of older adults; however, seniors can pick up a meal to go at 5 different locations in the County. Typically, Nutrition Programs are not allowed this style of service; however, Federal regulations have been modified to allow this service to assist with food security in our communities.
- **AddLIFE Transportation:** Specialized transportation services continue as usual with driver precautions including masks, frequent van sanitizing, and transporting one customer at a time. We are currently suspending rider co-pays during this time to help people get to essential medical appointments and shopping. We have added a grocery delivery service to our most rural parts of Barron County to help vulnerable older adults stay safely at home. Again, grocery delivery is not typically allowable with DOT funding; however, the State has allowed this service to begin to help serve older adults stay home during this pandemic. The State is thankful that Barron County and other counties are able to adapt to meet the needs.
- **Medical Equipment Loan Closet:** Our loan closet remains suspended at this time.
- **Daybreak:** Our adult day respite services remain suspended until further notice. Staff continue to maintain connections with participants, caregivers, staff and volunteers of the program over the phone. These weekly "check-ins" have proved to be very valuable to help combat isolation as well as get needed resources and information to those that typically benefit from our respite program.
- **Commodity Food Program:** Commodity Food distribution continues with volunteers delivering to doorsteps each month.
- **Healthy Aging Workshops:** Workshops such as Stepping On, Healthy Living with Diabetes, Living Well with Chronic Conditions, and Powerful Tools for Caregivers remain suspended; however, our Health Promotion Coordinator Peg Schmidt is working to bring some of these workshops back virtually. Workshops that are currently available virtually or phone include:  
  - Mind over Matter: Healthy Bowel, Healthy Bladder**
  - Aging Mastery Program Playbook Club**
  - Boost Your Brain and Memory**
- **Support Groups:** All support groups hosted by the ADRC remain suspended at this time.
- **Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Vouchers:** We will be offering Farmer's Market vouchers this year. We are working with WestCap on a modified version of distribution.

## Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) Continued

- **Tax Aide Assistance:** Tax aide assistance has been cancelled for the rest of the year.
- **Upcoming events:** We have been in the “mode” of canceling or suspending our large group events; however, as we realize that large gathering events may not be recommended well into the future, staff are thinking outside the box. Trisha Witham will be hosting a virtual Dementia 101 educational training on Wednesday June 10 from 10-11:30am. She will be using Google Meet as her platform. You can register at [ADRC Dementia 101](#) or email Trisha to register. Please feel free to share widely as a resource for your families, friends and neighbors. Peg Schmidt is also actively working with WITC on plans to hold a virtual Caregiver Conference in October. Stay tuned!

New opportunities have emerged:

One of the hardest parts of this pandemic for staff is losing that face to face contact with customers. What motivates most of us at the ADRC is that person-centered interaction and the relief we see when we help someone. We are finding new ways, whether virtually, email, or phone to connect with people. A staff member recently held a virtual meeting with 4 daughters who live across the county – and are caring long distance for their mother in Barron County. They all reported the virtual meeting a success, which gives our office more confidence when finding ways to help people the best we can.

We have also strengthened our partnerships with others in the community. The ADRC has assisted Public Health and Emergency Management in some behind the scene work such as becoming Contact Tracers and assisting with grant writing. We have also worked on a collaborative effort with WITC to bring virtual education to the community; focusing on caregiving information and resources and elder abuse. Tough times can also bring innovation. We continue to explore ideas for more technology devices, hot spots and internet to caregivers, maybe while inadvertently becoming more tech experts ourselves!

We encourage everyone to continue to check in on your family, friends and neighbors by calling them frequently. Social isolation is very concerning, now more than ever. Help loved ones develop an emergency backup plan – especially for caregivers in the event you or the one you care for gets sick.

Finally, even though our services remain modified, we continue to actively plan how to transition back to fully re-opened services and when/what that looks like for us. Many things don't stop because of the pandemic. We continue to assist the public in learning about and completing the 2020 Census and encourage those we assist to advocate and engage in elections. We continue to collaborate with pretty much all other county departments as well as other community partners about how we meet the needs of those we serve. If you or anyone you know needs any information about our services or events, please call at 715-537-6225, email staff, or check out our website at [www.adrcconnections.org](http://www.adrcconnections.org), or like us on Facebook @[ADRCBarron](#).